

I Claim:

1. A small driverless passenger vehicle comprising:
 - a floor having a directional axis, the floor being supported on an array of wheels for conveying the vehicle over a surface;
 - a canopy disposed above the floor and cooperating with the floor to define an enclosure in which passengers are seated;
 - a seating arrangement within the enclosure, the seating arrangement having at least three laterally extending seating spaces, and
 - a single seating station disposed at each seating space for seating a passenger facing laterally with respect to the directional axis of the floor, the seating stations at adjacent seating spaces facing in opposite lateral directions providing unobstructed floor space in front of each seating station and providing a space in the direction of the directional axis between upper bodies of adjacent passengers.
2. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein there are four seating spaces.
3. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein each seating station includes a seat defined by a horizontal surface and wherein at least one of the seats folds to a vertical orientation providing additional floor space.
4. The vehicle of claim 3 wherein the seats of at least two seating stations fold to a vertical orientation.

5. The vehicle of claim 3 wherein there are four seating stations and at least the seats of three seating stations fold to a vertical orientation.
6. The vehicle of claim 5 wherein the seats of all four seating stations fold to a vertical orientation.
7. The vehicle of claim 3 further including horizontal supports for the canopy extending parallel to the directional axis for mounting the canopy to slide from a closed position overlying all of the seating stations to an open position exposing at least seating stations having folding seats.
8. The vehicle in claim 7 wherein the canopy is U-shaped in cross section having leg panels with free edges that are supported on the horizontal supports, the canopy optionally having portions which are transparent and when in the open position allowing ingress and egress from opposite sides of the vehicle.
9. The vehicle of claim 8 wherein the canopy is cantilevered from the rear of the vehicle when in the open position.
10. The vehicle of claim 9 wherein the folding seats provide floor space for wheel chairs, packages, luggage and other items.
11. The vehicle of claim 9 wherein the vehicle includes an upwardly extending rear wall having a vent therethrough.

12. The vehicle of claim 11 wherein the vent is an opening adapted to receive a removable window and/or an optionally removable grill.

13. The vehicle of claim 12 wherein the canopy has an extended portion which extends over and past the opening to shield the opening from precipitation.

14. The vehicle of claim 13 further including an electric fan in the front of the vehicle for generating an air stream through the vehicle.

15. The vehicle of claim 1 in combination with a fleet of similar vehicles with each vehicle providing both shared service and private service, however not at the same time in the same vehicle.

16. The combination of claim 15 further including a main line over which the vehicles travel to carry passengers from one station to another, wherein each station comprises a shared service area for passengers willing to share a ride with strangers; a private service area for passengers deciding not to share rides with strangers; and a vehicle queuing area for arriving vehicles.

17. The vehicle of claim 3 in combination with a fleet of similar vehicles with each vehicle providing both shared service and private service.

18. The combination of claim 16 further including a main line over which the

vehicles travel to carry passengers from station to another wherein each station comprises a shared service area for passengers willing to share rides with strangers; a private service area for passengers not deciding to share rides with strangers; and a vehicle queuing area for arriving vehicles.

19. A method of operating a transit system, comprising:

providing a fleet of small driverless passenger vehicles, each vehicle having at least three seating stations which do not directly face one another and which face in alternate directions from opposite sides of the vehicle;

providing a transportation line having at least two stations from which the vehicles start and stop when carrying passengers therebetween;

queuing passengers who are willing to share rides with other passengers in at least one line at a shared service location;

queuing passengers who prefer not sharing rides with strangers in at least one line at a private service location.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein there are a number of stations, and wherein when any one of the vehicles arrives at a shared service area at one of the stations, all riding passengers exit the vehicle and the first waiting passenger in the line selects a designation just prior to entering the vehicle; the method further including notifying other passengers in the line of the selected destination and advancing passengers in the line going to the selected destination past passengers going to other destinations for boarding the vehicle to the destination selected by the first waiting passenger.

21. The method of claim 20 further including dividing the line into front and rear sections and notifying only those in the front section of an available seat for the selected destination.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein other passengers in the shared service line exercise the option to enter the vehicle even if the destination selected by the first waiting passenger is an initial destination, rather than a desired destination of other passengers, and wherein upon arrival at the initial destination the other passengers exercise the option of then boarding either a vehicle in the private service area or the shared service area to take another vehicle to their desired destination.